

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

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A SERMON
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*"The righteous also shall hold on his way."
Job 17:9.*

THE man who is righteous before God has a way of his own. It is not the way of the flesh, nor the way of the world. It is a way marked out for him by the divine command, in which he walks by faith. It is the King's highway of holiness—the unclean shall not pass over it—only the ransomed of the Lord shall walk there and these shall find it a path of separation from the world. Once entered upon the way of life, the pilgrim must persevere in it or perish, for thus says the Lord, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Perseverance in the path of faith and holiness is a necessity of the Christian, for only, "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." It is in vain to spring up quickly like the seed that was sown upon the rock and then by-and-by to wither when the sun is up. That would but prove that such a plant has no root in itself, but "the trees of the LORD are full of sap" and they abide and continue and bring forth fruit, even in old age, to show that the Lord is upright.

There is a great difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity, and this is generally seen in the failure of the one and the continuance of the other. Now, the declaration of the text is that the truly righteous man shall hold on his way—he shall not go back, he shall not leap the hedges and wander to the right hand or the left—he shall not lie down in idleness, neither shall he faint and cease to go upon his journey, but he "shall hold on his way." It will frequently be very difficult for him to do so, but he will have such resolution, such power of inward grace given him, that he will "hold on his way" with stern determination, as though he held on by his teeth, resolving never to let go.

Perhaps he may not always travel with equal speed. It is not said that he shall hold on his *pace*, but he shall hold on his *way*. There are times when we run and are not weary, and at other times when we walk are thankful that we do not faint. Ay, and there are periods when we are glad to go on all fours and creep upward with pain, but still we prove that "the righteous shall hold on his way." Under all difficulties, the face of the man whom God has justified is steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, nor will he turn aside till his eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

This is a great wonder. It is a marvel that any man should be a Christian at all, and a greater wonder that he should continue so. Consider the weakness of the flesh, the strength of inward corruption, the fury of Satanic temptations, the seductions of wealth and the pride of life, the world and the fashion thereof—all these things are against us and yet behold, "Greater is he that is for us than all they that are against us," and defying sin, and Satan, and death, and hell, the righteous holds on his way.

I take our text as accurately setting forth the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. "The righteous shall hold on his way." Years ago, when there was an earnest and even a bitter controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, it was the habit of each side to caricature the other. Very much of the argument was not directed against the real sentiment of the opposite party, but against what had been imputed to them. They made a man of straw and then they burned him, which is a pretty easy thing to do, but I trust we have left these things behind.

The glorious truth of the final perseverance of the saints has survived controversy and in some form or other is the cherished belief of the children of God. Take care, however, to be clear as to what it is. The Scripture does not teach that a man will reach his journey's end without continuing to travel along

the road. It is not true that one act of faith is all and that nothing is needed of daily faith, prayer, and watchfulness. Our doctrine is the very opposite, namely, that the righteous shall hold on his way, or in other words, shall continue in faith, in repentance, in prayer, and under the influence of the grace of God.

We do not believe in salvation by a physical force which treats a man as a dead log and carries him, whether he wills it or not, towards heaven. No, “he holds on,” he is personally active about the matter and plods on up hill and down dale till he reaches his journey’s end. We never thought, nor even dreamed, that merely because a man supposes that he once entered on this way he may therefore conclude that he is certain of salvation, even if he leaves the way immediately. No, but we say that he who truly receives the Holy Ghost, so that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not go back, but persevere in the way of faith. It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and this he cannot be if he were left to go back and delight in sin as he did before, and therefore he shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Though the believer to his grief will commit many a sin, yet still the tenor of his life will be holiness to the Lord, and he will hold on in the way of obedience. We detest the doctrine that a man who has once believed in Jesus will be saved even if he altogether forsakes the path of obedience. We deny that such a turning aside is possible to the true believer, and therefore the idea imputed to us is clearly an invention of the adversary. No, beloved, a man if he is indeed a believer in Christ will not live after the will of the flesh. When he does fall into sin, it will be his grief and misery, and he will never rest till he is cleansed from guilt. But I will say this of the believer, that if he could live as he would like to live, he would live a perfect life. If you ask him if after believing he may live as he wishes, he will reply, “Would God I could live as I list, for I desire to live altogether without sin. I would be perfect, even as my Father in heaven is perfect.” The doctrine is not the licentious idea that a believer may live in sin, but that he cannot and will not do so.

This is the doctrine and we will first *prove it*, and secondly, in the Puritanic sense of the word, we will briefly *improve it*, by drawing two spiritual lessons therefrom.

I. LET US PROVE THE DOCTRINE.

Please follow me with your Bibles open. You, dear friends, have most of you received as a matter of faith the doctrines of grace and therefore to you the doctrine of final perseverance cannot require any proving, because it follows from all the other doctrines. We believe that God has an elect people whom He has chosen unto eternal life and that truth necessarily involves the perseverance in grace. We believe in special redemption, and this secures the salvation and consequent perseverance of the redeemed. We believe in effectual calling, which is bound up with justification, a justification which ensures glorification.

The doctrines of grace are like a chain—if you believe in one of them you must believe the next, for each one involves the rest—therefore I say that you who accept any of the doctrines of grace must receive this also as involved in them. But I am about to try to prove this to those who do not believe the doctrines of grace. I would not argue in a circle and prove one thing which you doubt by another thing which you doubt, but “to the law and to the testimony,” to the actual words of Scripture we shall refer the matter.

Before we advance to the argument, it will be well to remark that those who reject the doctrine frequently tell us that there are many cautions in the Word of God against apostatizing and that those cautions can have no meaning if it be true that the righteous shall hold on his way. But what if those cautions are the means in the hand of God of keeping His people from wandering? What if they are used to excite a holy fear in the minds of His children and so become the means of preventing the evil which they denounce? I would also remind you that in the epistle to the Hebrews, which contains the most solemn warnings against apostasy, the apostle always takes care to add words which show that he did not believe that those whom he warned would actually apostatize.

Turn to Hebrews 6:9. He has been telling these Hebrews that if those who had been once enlightened should fall away, it would be impossible to renew them again into repentance, and he adds, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” In the tenth chapter he gives an equally earnest warning, declaring that those who should do despite to the Spirit of grace are worthy of sorer punishment than those who despised Moses’ law, but he closes the chapter with these words, “Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Thus he shows what the consequences of apostasy would be, but he is convinced that they will not choose to incur such a fearful doom.

Again, objectors sometimes mention instances of apostasy which are mentioned in the Word of God, but on looking into them it will be discovered that these are cases of persons who did but profess to know Christ, but were not really possessors of the divine life. John, in His first epistle, 2:19, fully describes these apostates, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

The like is true of that memorable passage in John, where our Savior speaks of branches of the vine which are cut off and cast into the fire—these are described as branches in Christ that bear no fruit. Are those real Christians? How can they be so if they bear no fruit? “By their fruits you shall know them.” The branch which bears fruit is purged, but it is never cut off. Those which bear no fruit are not figures of true Christians, but they fitly represent mere professors. Our Lord, in Matthew 7:22, tells us concerning many who will say in that day “Lord, Lord,” that He will reply, “I never knew you.” Not, “I have forgotten you,” but “I never knew you”—they were never really His disciples.

But now to the argument itself. First, we argue the perseverance of the saints most distinctly *from the nature of the life which is imparted at regeneration*. What does Peter say concerning this life? In 1 Peter 1:23, he speaks of the people of God as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.” The new life which is planted in us when we are born again is not like the fruit of our first birth, for that is subject to mortality, but it is a divine principle which cannot die nor be corrupt and if it be so, then he who possesses it must live forever, must, indeed, be evermore what the Spirit of God in regeneration has made him.

So in 1 John 3:9, we have the same thought in another form. “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” That is to say, the bent of the Christian’s life is not towards sin. It would not be a fair description of his life that he lives in sin—on the contrary, he fights and contends against sin because he has an inner principle which cannot sin. The new life sins not—it is born of God and cannot transgress—and though the old nature wars against it, yet does the new life so prevail in the Christian that he is kept from living in sin.

Our Savior, in His simple teaching of the Gospel to the Samaritan woman, said to her (Joh 4:13), “Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Now, if our Savior taught this to a sinful and ignorant woman, at His first interview with her, I take it that this doctrine is not to be reserved for the inner circle of full-grown saints, but to be preached ordinarily among the common people and to be held up as a most blessed privilege. If you receive the grace which Jesus imparts to your souls, it shall be like the good part which Mary chose—it shall not be taken away from you. It shall abide in you, not as the water in a cistern, but as a living fountain springing up unto everlasting life.

We all know that the life given in the new birth is intimately connected with faith. Now, faith is in itself a conquering principle. In the first epistle of John, which is a great treasury of argument (1Jo 5:4), we are told, “Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” See, then, that which is born of God in us, namely, the new life, is a conquering principle. There

is no hint given that it can ever be defeated, and faith, which is its outward sign, is also in itself triumphant evermore. Therefore of necessity, because God has implanted such a wondrous life in us in bringing us out of darkness into His marvelous light, because He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, because the eternal and ever blessed Spirit has come to dwell in us, we conclude that the divine life within us shall never die. “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

The second argument to which I shall call your attention shall be drawn *from our Lord’s own express declarations*. Here we shall look to the Gospel of John again and in that blessed third of John, where our Lord was explaining the Gospel in the simplest possible style to Nicodemus, we find Him laying great stress upon the fact that the life received by faith in Himself is eternal. Look at that precious verse, the fourteenth, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in him should not perish, *but have eternal life.*”

Do men therefore believe in Him and yet perish? Do they believe in Him and receive a spiritual life which comes to an end? It cannot be, for “God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish,” but he would perish if he did not persevere to the end and therefore he must persevere to the end. The believer has eternal life—how then can he die, so as to cease to be a believer? If he does not abide in Christ, he evidently does not have eternal life, therefore he shall abide in Christ, even to the end.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” To this some reply that a man may have everlasting life and lose it. To which we answer, the words cannot so mean. Such a statement is a self-evident contradiction. If the life be lost, the man is dead. How, then, did he have everlasting life? It is clear that he had a life which lasted only for a while—he certainly did not have everlasting life, for if he had it, he must live everlastingly. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life” (Joh 3:36). The saints in heaven have eternal life and no one expects them to perish. Their life is eternal, but eternal life is eternal life, whether the person possessing it dwells on earth or in heaven.

I need not read all the passages in which the same truth is taught, but further on, in John 6:47, our Lord told the Jews, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on me has everlasting life,” not temporary life, but “everlasting life.” And in the fifty-first verse He said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” Then comes that famous declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, which, if there were no other at all, would be quite sufficient to prove our point. John 10:28, “And I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any” (the word “man” is not in the original) “pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” What can He mean but this, that He has grasped His people and that He means to hold them securely in His mighty hand?

*“Where is the power can reach us there,
Or what can pluck us thence?”*

Over and above the hand of Jesus which was pierced comes the hand of the omnipotent Father as a sort of second grasp. “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Surely this must show that the saints are secure from anything and everything which would destroy them and consequently, safe from total apostasy.

Another passage speaks to the same effect—it is to be found in Matthew 24:24, where the Lord Jesus has been speaking of the false prophets that should deceive many. “There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect,” which shows that it is impossible for the elect to be deceived by them. Of Christ’s sheep it is said, “A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers,” but by divine instinct they know the voice of the Good Shepherd and they follow Him.

Thus has our Savior declared, as plainly as words possibly can express it, that those who are His people possess eternal life within themselves and shall not perish, but shall enter into everlasting felicity. “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

A very blessed argument for the safety of the believer is found in *our Lord’s intercession*. You need not turn to the passage, for you know it well, which shows the connection between the living intercession of Christ and the perseverance of His people, “Wherefore also he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). Our Lord Jesus is not dead. He has risen, He has gone up into the glory, and now before the eternal throne He pleads the merit of His perfect work, and as He pleads there for all His people whose names are written on His heart—as the names of Israel were written on the jeweled breastplate of the high priest—His intercession saves His people even to the uttermost.

If you would like an illustration of it you must turn to the case of Peter which is recorded in Luke 22:31, where our Lord said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.” The intercession of Christ does not save His people from being tried and tempted, and tossed up and down like wheat in a sieve, it does not save them even from a measure of sin and sorrow, but it does save them from total apostasy. Peter was kept, and though he denied his Master, yet it was an exception to the great rule of his life. By grace he did hold on his way, because not only then, but many a time beside, though he sinned, he had an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

If you desire to know how Jesus pleads, read at your leisure at home that wonderful seventeenth of John—the Lord’s prayer. What a prayer it is! “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name: those that you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.” Judas was lost, but he was only given to Christ as an apostle and not as one of His sheep. He had a temporary faith and maintained a temporary profession, but he never had eternal life or he would have lived on.

Those groans and cries of the Savior which accompanied His pleadings in Gethsemane were heard in heaven and answered. “Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me.” The Lord does keep them by His Word and Spirit, and will keep them. If the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane were answered, how much more that which now goes up from the eternal throne itself!

*“With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below.
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in glory now.*

*“For all that come to God by Him,
Salvation He demands.
Points to their names upon His breast,
And spreads His wounded hands.”*

Ah, if my Lord Jesus pleads for me, I cannot be afraid of earth or hell. That living, intercessory voice has power to keep the saints and so has the living Lord Himself, for He has said, “Because I live you shall live also” (Joh 14:19).

Now for a fourth argument. We gather sure confidence of the perseverance of the saints *from the character and work of Christ*. I will say little about that, for I trust my Lord is so well known to you that He needs no word of commendation from me to you, but if you know Him, you will say what the apostle does in 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” He did not say, “I know *in* whom I have believed,” as most people quote it, but, “I know whom I have believed.” He knew Jesus, he knew His heart and His

faithfulness, he knew His atonement and its power, he knew His intercession and its might, and he committed his soul to Jesus by an act of faith and he felt secure.

My Lord is so excellent in all things that I need give you but one glimpse of His character and you will see what He was when He dwelt here among men. At the commencement of John 13, we read, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” If He had not loved His disciples to the end when here, we might conclude that He was changeable now as then, but if He loved His chosen to the end while yet in His humiliation below, it brings us the sweet and blessed confidence that now that He is in heaven He will love to the end all those who confide in Him.

Fifthly, we infer the perseverance of the saints from *the tenor of the covenant of grace*. Would you like to read it for yourselves? If so, turn to the Old Testament, Jeremiah 32, and there you will find the covenant of grace set forth at some length. We shall only be able to read the fortieth verse, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” He will not depart from them and they shall not depart from Him—what can be a greater assurance of their perseverance even to the end?

Now that this is the covenant of grace under which we live is clear from the epistle to the Hebrews, for the apostle, in the eighth chapter, quotes that passage to this very end. The question runs thus, “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

The old covenant had an “if” in it, and so it suffered shipwreck. It was, “If you will be obedient, then you shall be blessed,” and hence there came a failure on man’s part and the whole covenant ended in disaster. It was the covenant of works and under it we were in bondage, until we were delivered from it and introduced to the covenant of grace, which has no “if” in it, but runs upon the strain of promise. It is, “I will” and “you shall,” all the way through. “I will be your God and you shall be my people.”

Glory be to God, this covenant will never pass away, for see how the Lord declares its enduring character in the book of Isaiah (54:10), “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.” And again in Isaiah 55:3, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The idea of falling utterly away from grace is a relic of the old legal spirit, it is a going away from grace to come under law again, and I charge you who have once been manumitted slaves and have had the fetters of legal bondage struck from off your hands, never consent to wear those bonds again. Christ has saved you, if indeed you are believers in Him, and He has not saved you for a week, or a month, or a quarter, or a year, or twenty years, but He has given you eternal life and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands. Rejoice you in this blessed covenant of grace.

The sixth most forcible argument is drawn *from the faithfulness of God*. Look at Romans 11:29. What does the apostle say there, speaking by the Holy Ghost? “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” which means that He does not give life and pardon to a man and call him by grace and afterwards repent of what He has done, and withdraw the good things which He has bestowed. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.” When He puts forth His hand to save, He does not withdraw it till the work is accomplished. His Word is, “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). “The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent” (1Sa 15:29).

The apostle would have us ground our confidence of perseverance upon the confirmation which divine faithfulness is sure to bestow upon us. He says in 1 Corinthians 1:8, “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that *you* may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom

you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And again he speaks to the same effect in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it.” It was of old the will of God to save the people whom He gave to Jesus, and from this He has never turned, for our Lord said, “And this is the Father’s will which has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (Joh 6:39). Thus you see from these passages, and there are numbers of others, that God’s faithfulness secures the preservation of His people and “the righteous shall hold on his way.”

The seventh and last argument shall be drawn *from what has already been done in us*. I shall do little more than quote the Scriptures and leave them to sink into your minds. A blessed passage is that in Jeremiah 31:3, “The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.” If He did not mean that His love should be everlasting, He would never have drawn us at all, but because that love is everlasting, therefore with lovingkindness has He drawn us.

The apostle argues this in a very elaborate manner in Romans 5:9-10, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” I cannot stop to show how every word of this passage is emphatic, but it is—if God reconciled us when we were enemies, He certainly will save us now we are His friends, and if our Lord Jesus has reconciled us by His death, much more will He save us by His life, so that we may be certain He will not leave nor forsake those whom He has called.

Do you need me to bring to your minds that golden chapter, the eighth of Romans, the noblest of all language that was ever written by human pen? “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” There is no break in the chain between justification and glory, and no supposable breakage can occur, for the apostle puts that out of all possibility by saying, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Then he heaps on all the things that might be supposed to separate, and says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In the same manner the apostle writes in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I cannot stay to mention the many other Scriptures in which what has been done is made an argument that the work shall be completed, but it is after the manner of the Lord to go through with whatever He undertakes. “He will give grace and glory,” and perfect that which concerns us.

One marvelous privilege which has been bestowed upon us is of peculiar significance—we are one with Christ by close, vital, spiritual union. We are taught of the Spirit that we enjoy a marriage union with Christ Jesus our Lord—shall that union be dissolved? We are married to Him. Has He ever given a bill of divorce? There has never been a case where the heavenly bridegroom divorcing from His heart a chosen soul to whom He has been united in the bonds of grace. Listen to these words from the prophecy of Hosea 2:19-20, “And I will betroth you unto me forever; yea, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.”

This marvelous union is set forth by the figure of the head and the body—we are members of the body of Christ. Do the members of His body rot away? Is Christ amputated? Is He fitted with new limbs as old ones are lost? Nay, being members of this body, we shall not be divided from Him. “He that is

joined unto the Lord,” says the apostle, “is one spirit,” and if we are made one spirit with Christ, that mysterious union does not allow for the supposition of a separation.

The Lord has wrought another great work upon us, for He has sealed us by the Holy Spirit. The possession of the Holy Ghost is the divine seal which sooner or later is set upon all the chosen. There are many passages in which that seal is spoken of and is described as being an earnest, an earnest of the inheritance. But how can it be an earnest if after receiving it we do not attain the purchased possession? Think over the words of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, “Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God; who has also sealed us; and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

To the same effect the Holy Spirit speaks in Ephesians 1:13-14, “In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” Beloved, we feel certain that if the Spirit of God dwells in us, He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead will keep our souls and will also quicken our mortal bodies and present us complete before the glory of His face at the last.

Therefore, we sum up the argument with the confident expression of the apostle when he said (2Ti 4:18), “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

II. Now, how shall we IMPROVE THE DOCTRINE PRACTICALLY?

The first improvement is *for encouragement to the man who is on the road to heaven*. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” If I had to take a very long journey, say from London to John o’ Groats, with my poor tottering limbs to carry me, and such a weight to carry too, I might begin to despair and indeed, the very first day’s walking would knock me out, but if I had a divine assurance unmistakably saying, “You will hold on your way and you will get to your journey’s end,” I feel that I would brace myself up to achieve the task.

One might hardly undertake a difficult journey if he did not believe that he would finish it, but the sweet assurance that we shall reach our home makes us pluck up courage. The weather is wet, rainy, blustering, but we must keep on, for the end is sure. The road is very rough, and runs up hill and down dale. We pant for breath and our limbs are aching, but as we shall get to our journey’s end, we push on. We are ready to creep into some cottage and lie down to die of weariness, saying, “I shall never accomplish my task,” but the confidence which we have received sets us on our feet and off we go again. To the right-hearted man the assurance of success is the best stimulus for labor.

If it be so, that I shall overcome the world, that I shall conquer sin, that I shall not be an apostate, that I shall not give up my faith, that I shall not fling away my shield, that I shall come home a conqueror—then will I play the man and fight like a hero. This is one of the reasons why British troops have so often won the fight, because the drummer boys did not know how to beat a retreat, and the rank and file did not believe in the possibility of defeat. They were beaten oftentimes by the French, so the French tell us, but they would not believe it, and therefore would not run away. They felt like winning and so they stood like solid rocks amidst the dread artillery of the foe till victory was declared on their side.

Brethren, we shall do the same if we realize that we are preserved in Christ Jesus, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Every true believer shall be a conqueror and hence the reason for warring a good warfare. There is laid up for us in heaven a crown of life that fades not away. The crown is laid up for *us* and not for chance comers. The crown reserved for me is such that no one else can wear it, and if it be so, then will I battle and strive to the end, till the last enemy is overcome, and death itself is dead.

Another improvement is this—what an *encouragement this is to sinners* who desire salvation. It should lead them to come and receive it with grateful delight. Those who deny this doctrine offer sinners a poor two penny-halfpenny salvation, not worth having—and it is no marvel that they turn away from

it. As the Pope gave England to the Spanish king—if he could get it—so do they proffer Christ's salvation if a man will deserve it by his own faithfulness. According to some, eternal life is given to you, but then it may not be eternal. You may fall from it. It may last only for a time.

When I was but a child I used to trouble myself because I saw some of my young companions, who were a little older than myself, when they became apprentices and came to London, become vicious. I have heard their mother's laments and seen their tears about them. I have heard their fathers expressing bitterest sorrow over the boys whom I knew in my class to be quite as good as ever I had been—and it used to strike me with horror that I perhaps might sin as they had done. They became Sabbath-breakers—in one case there was a theft from the till to go into Sunday pleasuring.

I dreaded the very thought. I desired to maintain an unsullied character and when I heard that if I gave my heart to Christ, He would keep me, that was the very thing which won me. It seemed to be a celestial life assurance for my character, that if I would really trust Christ with myself, He would save me from the errors of youth, preserve me amid the temptations of manhood, and keep me to the end. I was charmed with the thought that if I was made righteous by believing in Christ Jesus I should hold on my way by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That which charmed me in my boyhood is even more attractive to me in middle life. I am happy to preach to you a sure and everlasting salvation. I feel that I have something to bring before you this morning which is worthy of every sinner's eager acceptance. I have neither an "if" nor "but" with which to dilute the pure Gospel of my message. Here it is, "He that believes and is baptized *shall be saved*."

I dropped a piece of ice upon the floor yesterday and I said to one who was in the room, "Is not that a diamond?" "Ah," he said, "you would not leave it on the floor, I warrant you, if it were a diamond of that size." Now I have a diamond here—eternal life, everlasting life! I think you will be in haste to take it up at once, to be saved now, to be saved in living, to be saved in dying, to be saved in rising again, forever and ever, by the eternal power and infinite love of God.

Is not this worth having? Grasp at it, poor soul. You may have it if you do but believe in Jesus Christ or in other words, trust your soul with Him. Deposit your eternal destiny in this divine bank—then you can say, "I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 10:1-30
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—245, 668, 738.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.